

PROJECT OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND IMPLEMENTATION (POGI)

FY 2021 Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program Organizational Components

Funding Opportunity Number: SFOP0007611

Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division

The POGI guidelines apply specifically to the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) issued by the Office of Citizen Exchanges, Youth Programs Division for the FY 2021 Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program Organizational Components. Proposals must conform to the NOFO, the Guidelines stated in this document, and standard Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI). Applications not adhering to the conditions set forth herein may be deemed technically ineligible. These guidelines are specific to the program mentioned above and are IN ADDITION TO the Standard Guidelines outlined in the PSI. If there is a perceived disparity between the standard and program specific Guidelines and the program information supplied in the accompanying NOFO, the NOFO is to be the dominant reference.

I. STATEMENT OF WORK

A. Overview

Since 1993, the FLEX program has provided secondary school students from Europe and Eurasia the opportunity to experience life first-hand in American host communities by living with an American family and attending an accredited American high school. The Organizational Components award includes managing a broad range of administrative program details, including recruitment and selection of both foreign and U.S. participants, communication with natural parents and U.S. embassies, and arranging for alumni activities for the participants for the 2022-23 academic year. Information on the program is available at <https://exchanges.state.gov/non-us/program/future-leaders-exchange>. In addition the FY 2021 award proposals should include plans for a new FLEX Abroad pilot program, pending the availability of funding, to complement the traditional FLEX program by sending 15-20 U.S. high school students abroad to spend an academic year in one of the existing FLEX partner countries.

FLEX Program participants are 15-18.5 years old at the program start date (specific age requirements may be set in each country based on local education system restrictions). The foreign, or inbound, participants are from countries that will likely include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Please note that the award recipient must also demonstrate the willingness and ability to recruit in Belarus and Russia (previous FLEX countries) should it become possible to do so.

Please include a separate sub-budget not to exceed \$400,000 covering all elements of the FLEX Abroad pilot program, which, as noted, is pending the availability of funds. The 15-20 FLEX Abroad students will be placed in approximately three of the existing FLEX countries, which will be chosen at a later date based on U.S. foreign policy priorities, the in-country capacity of the recipient, and input from U.S.

embassies and the Department's regional bureaus.

Under the terms of the program, all participants must return to their home countries following the conclusion of their exchange program in the United States. The award recipient is expected to assist the U.S. Department of State in adhering to all requirements and regulations of the J-1 Secondary School Student visa program. https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/retrieveECFR?gp=&SID=1bc531bf257789e45b3049bff8b50d64&r=PART&n=22y1.0.1.7.35#se22.1.62_125

The U.S. Department of State seeks to include students of diverse national, ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, and students with disabilities.

The FLEX Organizational Components includes these duties: (1) recruit and select U.S. and international students from designated countries; (2) provide orientations for both inbound and FLEX Abroad participants; (3) coordinate travel and logistics; (4) liaise with ECA, U.S. embassies and natural families; (5) provide advice and counseling for students and placement organizations (POs); (6) provide two Civic Education Workshops in the United States for the inbound students; and (7) provide activities, events and follow-on alumni programs that promote civil society, leadership, and mutual understanding for all participants. Activities covered in this award will be conducted in direct coordination with the separate FLEX Placement Organizations (POs), which will receive awards in FY 2022 for the host family and school placement and monitoring of the inbound participants. These POs are selected under a separate competition to find host family and school placements for the FLEX participants, as well as monitor the FLEX participants while they are on program. It is imperative for the success of the participants and the program that all FLEX awards recipient work efficiently and openly with ECA and the POs throughout the duration of the award. While the award recipient will be responsible for the coordination of many overarching activities involved in the implementation of the FLEX program, the POs will recruit, screen, and select U.S. host families for the inbound participants; select schools and secure school enrollments; conduct in-person host family and student community-based orientations; monitor and support students throughout the school year; and organize student enhancement activities. Each PO is provided Operational Guidelines, a manual that your organization develops, which give instructions that the POs must follow for the smooth coordination of tasks.

For the U.S. participants in the FLEX Abroad pilot program, the recipient will be responsible for recruiting, screening, and selecting both participants and host families; selecting schools and securing school enrollments; conducting in-person host family orientations; conducting arrival, mid-year, and end-of-program orientations for the American participants; monitoring and supporting students throughout the school year; and organizing enhancement activities.

FLEX Program Goals

The overall goals of the FLEX program are to:

1. Benefit American students, communities, and schools by exposing them to new cultural experiences;

2. Promote better understanding among youth from participating foreign countries about American society, people, institutions, values, and culture;
3. Promote better understanding among U.S. participants about the society, people, institutions, values, and culture of their host countries;
4. Foster lasting personal and professional ties between inbound participants and their host communities;
5. Advance participants' leadership skills, respect for diversity, critical thinking, and an understanding of civil society during the exchange experience and beyond; and
6. Enhance Americans' understanding of other countries and cultures and increase understanding of American values in communities abroad.

The following outcomes will indicate a successful exchange:

- FLEX participants will develop an appreciation for the culture of their host nation, an understanding of its underlying values and diversity, and increased tolerance and respect for others with differing views and beliefs.
- FLEX participants will share their home cultures with their host communities.
- FLEX participants will interact with their host communities and generate enduring ties.
- FLEX participants will acquire an understanding of important elements of a civil society. This includes concepts such as volunteerism and the idea that American citizens can and do act at the grassroots level to deal with societal problems, and an awareness of and respect for the rule of law.
- FLEX participants will gain leadership skills that will enable them, as FLEX alumni, to share their experience in their home countries, perform community service, and initiate activities in their home countries that focus on social, economic, and environmental development.

Program Timetable

The proposal should be planned in accordance with the dates and deadlines set by the needs of the program. The recipient must complete the recruitment and selection process by the end of February 2022, so that it can disseminate finalist applications to the FLEX POs for placing the students in host families and schools. Foreign and U.S. participants will travel to their host communities around August 2022. Return travel will occur in May-June 2023.

A notional timetable follows:

- June 1, 2021: Cooperative Agreement awarded
- Fall 2021-December 2021: Student outreach and recruitment conducted for both FLEX inbound and FLEX Abroad
- January-February 2022: Selection of FLEX inbound and FLEX Abroad student finalists and alternates
- January-February 2022: Youth Programs biennial meeting in Washington, D.C.
- February-April 2022: FLEX inbound students' applications submitted to POs
- February-August 2022: FLEX Abroad students' host family placements finalized
- June-July 2022: Pre-departure preparation and student orientations
- July 2022: English Language workshop for Language Program participants

- August 2022: Staggered student travel
- August 2022: Arrival workshop for FLEX inbound students with disabilities
- Late August 2022: All placement information (host family names and addresses, confirmed school enrollments, etc.) to be submitted to the U.S. Department of State for FLEX students by August 31, 2022.
- Winter 2023: ECA Academic Year Programs meeting and FLEX-specific meeting
- Spring 2023: Civic Education Workshops for approximately 200 selected FLEX inbound students
- May-June 2023: Return travel and Re-entry orientations
- June 2023-Summer 2024: Alumni programming
- September 30, 2024: Cooperative Agreement end date

Recruitment Targets

The recruitment targets for each country are tentative and represent recruitment goals only. Recruitment targets are not to be confused with finalist allocations. Finalist allocations are ultimately dependent on the availability of funding, legislative mandate, policy considerations, applicant pools, and PO placement commitments. For planning purposes, the following country targets, based on approximately 975 total academic year inbound participants, should be used. The proposal should demonstrate current capacity to recruit these target numbers in these countries and a plan to achieve recruitment targets in countries without current capacity. Note that these numbers are subject to change, especially if additional countries are added or removed.

As noted above, the recruitment target for the FLEX Abroad pilot program is 15-20 students, and the approximately three hosting countries will be selected at a later date. For planning purposes, the proposal should describe your organization's potential host family recruitment and hosting capacity in three or more of the existing FLEX partner countries listed below.

Anticipated Countries

Armenia	39	Kyrgyzstan	81	Serbia	50
Azerbaijan	21	Latvia	25	Slovakia	12
Czech Republic	14	Lithuania	25	Tajikistan	42
Estonia	23	Moldova	50	Turkmenistan	15
Georgia	80	Mongolia	20	Ukraine	215
Greece	10	Montenegro	15	Uzbekistan	20
Hungary	14	Poland	43		
Kazakhstan	126	Romania	35		

Note: The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposed project configurations, budgets, and participant numbers in accordance with the program's needs and availability of funds. In addition, the Bureau reserves the right to adjust and/or add additional countries should conditions change in a partner country and/or if other countries and/or regions are identified as viable alternatives and/or Department priorities. You must propose how to recruit the target number in each of the

countries listed, assuming conditions permit recruitment in each country, and you may not deviate from the recruitment targets without prior written approval from the Program Office.

In a cooperative agreement, the Department is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. The responsibilities of the Department are as follows:

Responsibilities of the U.S. Department of State

- Providing guidance and assistance in the execution of all program components and reviewing and concurring all aspects of the program's implementation, materials, and procedures.
- The program office will serve as the liaison between the award recipient and personnel within the U.S. Department of State, including ECA, the regional bureaus, and overseas posts regarding general program administrative duties among other things.
- Monitoring and evaluating the program and its participants including through communication by email, phone, and site visits.
- Requesting periodic and unscheduled reports on students' status and placement details, activities, accomplishments, and well-being.
- Providing guidance and clearance on dates, timelines, and venues for activities and events.
- Participating in student and alumni orientations and workshops.
- Coordinating FLEX student and alumni participation in appropriate U.S. Department of State activities; coordinating media coverage and outreach as appropriate.
- Requiring information about FLEX participant biographical data, placement data, and alumni contact information, and safeguarding that information.
- Approving program promotional materials and website information prior to publication or public dissemination.
- Representing the U.S. government as the program sponsor at events and orientations.
- Determining populations and priority areas of focus for FLEX recruitment.
- Publicizing program highlights and responding to Congressional and other U.S. government requests for information.

This solicitation covers multiple administrative components that will result in one award for all participating countries. The award recipient's responsibilities include:

Responsibilities of the Award Recipient

- recruitment and selection of approximately 975 FLEX inbound students and 15-20 FLEX Abroad students;
- materials, database, website development and marketing and outreach;
- placement and monitoring; and
- alumni programming for alumni of all years.

Under the terms of the FY 2021 Cooperative Agreement, the recipient organization will be responsible for administering full scholarships for an exchange program in the United States during academic year 2022-2023. The proposal should demonstrate flexibility and creativity in program administration given

the ongoing global crisis presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis may create significant challenges to normal or routine program administration in all areas, including recruitment, selection, logistical arrangements, on-program activities and alumni activities. When appropriate, applicants should discuss areas of possible impact and present alternatives to normal program operations to mitigate further program disruption.

Applicant organizations should include in the proposal submission provisions for virtual activities for all participants, if conditions warrant. The proposal should include tentative dates and topics for virtual activities.

B. Detailed Guidance on the Responsibilities of the Award Recipient for the Organizational Components

1. U.S. Embassy Liaison and Consultation

The award recipient should meet with Office of Public Affairs/Public Affairs Section (OPA/PAS) at the participating U.S. embassies within 30 days of the awarding of the cooperative agreement to discuss the geographic and other priorities for student recruitment, and, where applicable, host family recruitment for FLEX Abroad participants, in each country. You should summarize the results of this meeting, and subsequent similar meetings, for submission to the ECA program office. OPA/PAS involvement in recruitment, selection, orientations, and alumni activities will be determined through joint discussions between your organization and OPA/PAS.

The award recipient should maintain an open consultative relationship with OPA/PAS, as well as with the ECA program office. Your organization must have at least monthly contact with OPA/PAS personnel regarding recruitment and selection, security, travel, student issues, and/or other matters that may be of concern. This includes informing them of student successes. In countries where your organization does not have a physical presence to conduct program activities, you must coordinate with the bureau's program office and with the relevant OPA/PAS wherever possible in order to plan for recruitment and other award activities. In situations where the political situation prevents your organization from conducting program activities within a particular country, you will need to make special provisions to conduct program functions. Your organization should seek to conduct all of these functions efficiently and cost-effectively.

Ensure that American embassy personnel are not encumbered by the program's day-to-day functioning. If the political situation in any country results in the need for the embassy to assume more responsibility, your organization should provide assistance in whatever ways are possible. In all cases, field staff in each country should encourage OPA/PAS staff to participate in program events where appropriate, especially as pertains to alumni.

2. Overseas Infrastructure and Communications

The award recipient must maintain the appropriate infrastructure in participant countries to carry out the in-country functions for the program including ongoing communications with natural parents, on-

program support of the FLEX Abroad participants and host families, follow-on activities with alumni, and relations with foreign government officials. We require that your organization maintain a year-round presence in participant countries.

3. Program and Promotional Materials

The award recipient will design and develop materials that support all components of the program and inform and orient program constituents overseas and in the United States (i.e., participant, host family, and school administrator handbooks, operational guidelines, pre-departure orientation materials, etc.). ECA may request that new program materials be developed. Whenever possible, existing materials should be amended to fit changing needs and circumstances overseas and in the United States.

The award recipient will develop, design, amend, and/or arrange for the publication of new or current program materials. Relevant materials may include support for orientation programming and for the concerns of natural and host parents of program participants, PO local staff, and U.S. school administrators.

Brand the programs as U.S. Department of State programs and adhere to the Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients (see below) in all official documents and materials developed for promotional purposes. Coordinate all program and promotional material development with and obtain clearances from ECA prior to publication and distribution. Unless a waiver is granted, materials will display the American flag and the U.S. Department of State seal. The Bureau will retain copyright use of and may distribute materials related to these programs. Your organization must also communicate with POs and ECA to coordinate information for program websites.

Please refer to Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients: <https://eca.state.gov/comms-guidance>

4. Online Presence

Social Media, Mobile Technologies, and Department of State Online Communities

The award recipient will dedicate staff to coordinate information for program websites and maintain online program webpages that serve to market the program; disseminate information to U.S. and foreign publics; serve as a secure participant application and resource tool for students; and develop and implement strategies for the effective use of mobile technologies and other social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and platforms for blogging, to promote the program.

U.S. Department of State Web Resources

Outreach Resources: The award recipient is expected to support ECA promotional campaigns by providing information to ECA and updating promotional materials as needed, including hosting statistics.

In consultation with ECA's program office and in coordination with the Office of Alumni Affairs and Public Affairs and Strategic Communications' Web and Social Media team, as appropriate, develop and implement a strategy to leverage mobile and online technologies and networks, and the Department's digital properties. These may include the International Exchange Alumni website, Facebook, Twitter,

and other platforms that are key resources to promote the program, augment the impact of the in-person exchange, and engage program alumni.

Online Communities: All organization staff, program personnel, and regional and local volunteers associated with the FLEX program are expected to be knowledgeable of the U.S. Department of State's resources, such as, but not limited to alumni.state.gov, and to register as members or guest members of the websites.

The award recipient should effectively promote U.S. Department of State resource sites to participants, and participants are expected to become active members at these sites. While organizations may provide their own resources and online opportunities, these additional online resources may not replace involvement with U.S. Department of State online communities.

5. Student and Host Family Recruitment, Screening, and Selection

Develop an outreach plan that addresses country-specific interests of the U.S. Mission and will aid in recruiting a pool of students, and, where applicable, host families for the FLEX Abroad students, who in most cases will reflect the diversity of the country. Outreach may be conducted at any time during the activity period of this award. Recruit and screen applicants and select FLEX inbound and FLEX Abroad finalists and alternates through an open, transparent, merit-based competition. To accomplish this, the process must be under overall control of U.S. citizens. Develop a standard recruitment and selection process to use in all countries and maintain statistics at each stage by country, region, and gender. Application forms used in all countries must be uniform except for country-specific requirements that should be kept separate from the standardized application form. Application fees are not allowable. The recruitment process must be open to make it possible for any student who meets the eligibility criteria to apply and must seek to represent a diverse applicant pool. A special recruitment effort should target eligible individuals with significant physical disabilities. Students with special needs (i.e. asthma, diabetes, etc.) should also be identified, as should students needing additional pre-program English language instruction.

Ensure that all inbound finalists meet established age, academic, and English proficiency requirements to facilitate enrollment in U.S. high schools. Ideally, finalists will reflect the cultural, ethnic, national, and geographic diversity of the country from which they are selected, as well as gender diversity, though precise balance with a country's population demographics is not required. However, in some cases, ECA and/or the U.S. embassy may advise if U.S. interests necessitate a focus on particular populations. Finalists must generally be citizens or permanent residents of the countries from which they are chosen. Given budget constraints and/or security concerns, it may not be possible to conduct recruitment activities in all regions of each country. If necessary, in consultation with the U.S. embassy, recruitment may focus on major population areas or in specific geographic areas. Contingency plans should be devised for recruitment in countries where local conditions may impede the standard selection process.

Special pre-program English language enhancement activities may be provided to a small group of selected inbound students to ensure that weaker language qualifications of some students are not an excluding factor in their selection. The award recipient is encouraged to re-test finalists with low initial English test scores as needed prior to their departure to the United States. This additional language and

cultural support enhances the student's ability to adjust to the U.S. host environment and assists in the school placement process.

The last round of finalist selection must be conducted in the United States. The program aims to select students who have the motivation, as well as the academic, language, and social skills to be successful on the exchange. The foreign-language requirements, if any, for FLEX Abroad participants will be determined at a future date and will be a function of the host community learning environments in the selected hosting countries. Recruitment responsibilities also include the selection of and training for the application reviewers. All application materials and accompanying documentation must be kept strictly confidential and may not be shared with any organizations, groups, or individuals not directly involved with the FLEX program. Your proposal should describe how you will ensure the security and confidentiality of all applicant documentation.

- 6. Personal Identifiable Information:** In the course of any activities involving the gathering and maintaining of records of personal information, develop and ensure appropriate protocols and processes to protect personally identifiable information (PII) of individuals, including applicants, participants, alumni, host families, staff, and volunteers associated with the program.

7. Medical Screening

Arrange in-country medical screenings and clearances to ensure that students are healthy and have immunizations necessary for admission to American schools prior to leaving their home countries when possible. Rigorously review medical screening documents in the United States to confirm that all requirements have been met. Provide support for students with disabilities.

8. Issuing DS-2019 Forms, Adherence to J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program Regulations, and Foreign Visas for FLEX Abroad Participants

Designate an Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) under ECA's J-1 designation, G-1-00373, and a back-up for compliance with all relevant Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) requirements, including issuing DS-2019 forms for international participants and alternates. Collect and process all student data in SEVIS and prepare and deliver DS-2019 forms for finalists and alternates. Maintain and update SEVIS records as required, including appropriate finalization of SEVIS records when students' programs end including for students who ultimately do not participate. Coordinate with the FLEX Abroad finalists and alternates to obtain all required documents such as passports and visas.

9. Pre-Departure Orientation

Prior to arrival, provide consistent pre-departure orientation (PDO) programming to prepare students for life in their host country. Standardization is essential because it enables the dissemination of information, policies, and procedures critical to the students' success. PDOs should enforce participants' identity as participants in a U.S. government scholarship program.

Field staff should encourage the participation of U.S. embassy personnel in pre-departure orientations for the inbound students and for FLEX Abroad students whenever possible. In countries where your organization cannot conduct pre-departure orientations for inbound students, you should make

provisions for these orientations to be conducted by U.S. embassy staff, in a neighboring country, or with the agreement of the program office, in the United States immediately after the students arrive. The award recipient also will provide orientations for the natural parents prior to the students' departure for the hosting country.

Students identified to participate in the pre-program workshop for students with disabilities must have their in-country PDO programming at a time that takes into account their earlier departure from their home countries (see #11 Students with Disabilities and English Language Needs).

POs must prepare student materials specific to their organization to be distributed during the PDO. POs will send their materials to your organization by May 1, 2022 for distribution at PDO. Your organization should ensure that all materials provided in this manner identify students as U.S. Department of State sponsored students.

10. Travel

The award recipient will arrange for round-trip international travel originating from the students' home communities to the students' host communities, and assist with passports and visas. Regular communication and productive collaboration with POs are required to ensure effective coordination of student travel. In consultation with POs, your organization will develop standard travel procedures for all program participants, will recruit and train student escorts (flight leaders), and will coordinate travel for students who are for any reason unable to travel with an escorted group, including those who are voluntarily or involuntarily repatriated before the end of the exchange.

The award recipient should arrange travel in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible in accordance with the Fly America Act and all other USG travel regulations. All students with disabilities should depart their home countries in time to attend the pre-program workshop coordinated by your organization (see #11 Students with Disabilities and English Language Needs). Your organization should develop standard travel procedures—incorporating PO input—that spell out how group flights for the inbound students are scheduled, how individual students are assigned to a flight, how date-change requests from POs should be made, and how and when itineraries will be provided to POs. These procedures should also explain PO travel obligations, including the deadline by which arrival airport codes are due from the POs. Provide a detailed description of the support to students while they are en route to the United States, including airport staffing and emergency communication procedures.

Flight escorts should be selected primarily on their ability to manage a group of teenage travelers. They should be adequately trained to ensure their competence while traveling.

Travel Documents

The award recipient must obtain (and retain for three years) copies of the following documents for each program participant:

- Name/photo page of international passport;
- J-1 visa or foreign visa page in passport; and

- DS-2019 with stamp issued at U.S. port of entry or foreign entry stamp for FLEX Abroad participants.

11. Students with Disabilities and English Language Needs

Support for Students with Disabilities

In addition to the support liaison(s) described below, one staff member must be identified and have a sufficient amount of his/her time devoted specifically to working with students with disabilities. This person's responsibilities will include, but are not limited to, development of staff expertise in recruiting and supporting students and alumni with disabilities, providing resources and overseeing identification and procurement of reasonable accommodations (equipment, materials and services), providing training opportunities for program implementers, eligibility and placement needs assessments, and preparation of students upon arrival.

The award recipient must recruit and provide necessary support and accommodation for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities must meet the same standards as all other applicants, but they may receive reasonable accommodations for testing. The recipient must implement a review process carried out by a medical doctor to adequately assess the unique needs of each student and confirm that applicants with disabilities are able to travel and complete the program successfully; ensure that interviews, orientations, and other pre- and post-program activities include reasonable accommodations; coordinate student assignments with each PO to ensure that they have the resources and capacity to place and support the student(s); provide each PO with written, detailed, and accurate support and accommodation needs assessment results for each student prior to student travel; and provide funds for reasonable accommodations as necessary for students with disabilities to POs for the course of the exchange program.

Arrival Orientation(s) for Students with Disabilities

Coordinate dates with ECA, overseas partners, and POs to conduct an arrival workshop and assessment event(s). The assessment will include further professional review of each student to confirm and refine a support plan to be coordinated with each respective PO. The workshop will also present the history of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and resources available to people with disabilities in the United States, and will provide independence training and tools for these students.

Support for Inbound Students who Need English Language Programming

Your organization must work with and provide funds to POs as appropriate for inbound students who will be identified as needing additional English language support, or students who are not initially identified but whose PO believes the student would greatly benefit from additional language support. The Language Program should be individualized to meet each student's specific needs, and curriculum should focus on oral/aural proficiency, including conversation practice, comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary development, and sentence patterns. Students who will be identified as needing additional English language support should be offered, through the POs, a minimum of 20 hours of intensive tutoring at the start of their exchange program, up to 60 hours maximum, to be completed in the first three months of their arrival to the United States. In general, language program tutoring should be continued as long as the student and tutor feel it is necessary for the student to succeed on the program.

Note that some students may need the full 60 hours of tutoring.

12. Coordination of Student Information and Assignment

Develop and implement a plan for the equitable, transparent, and timely distribution of finalist documentation to the POs, taking into consideration such factors as gender, age, country of origin, need for English language enhancement activities, and disability.

13. Student Likeness (Photos and Video) Usage

The award recipient must obtain written permission from each student's natural family before using or sharing any photographic or video images of the student in any promotional or other materials. The recipient must also maintain records of these permissions and share with placement organizations as relevant.

14. On-Program Student Support Liaison

Your organization should designate a staff member(s) as a "Student Support Liaison" to serve as a point of contact for ECA on all student support issues, and will regularly collect on-program support updates from POs and report them on a routine basis to the ECA program office.

15. Communication of Student Concerns

Provide on-program support for students, their natural parents, and the staff and volunteers of the POs. Efforts must correspond to the Federal Regulations as outlined in 22 CFR 62 and should be closely coordinated with ECA's program office. The award recipient must report immediately to the ECA program office any situation that affects a participant's safety, health, or well-being, or any student disciplinary action at the second warning/probation level. Only the ECA Youth Programs Division can make the decision to end or terminate the program and repatriate a student; under no circumstances will the organization, its employees, volunteers, or third parties acting on its behalf inform participants that their program will terminate and they will be repatriated without specific direction from the ECA program office.

16. Communication with Natural Families

The award recipient will communicate and serve as liaison with the students' natural families during the program year and provide on-program support for students, staff, and volunteers in dealing with natural parents about any student problems that arise during the program.

17. ECA Academic Year Programs Meeting

The award recipient will participate with one or two representatives in the annual ECA academic year programs meeting, tentatively to be held for two days in Washington, D.C. in early 2023.

18. Civic Education Workshops (CEWs)

The award recipient will be responsible for developing and conducting two Civic Education Workshops (CEWs) for approximately 200 inbound students during the 2022-23 academic year in Washington, D.C. Your organization will coordinate a competitive application and essay contest to select the students, and will collaborate with POs under the Placement Component awards and resulting awards to make final

selections and arrange roundtrip transportation from the host communities to Washington, D.C., and to provide room and board for students during their time in Washington, D.C. The award recipient should provide ground transportation for participants in the Washington, D.C. area, including to and from area airports.

The CEWs should not exceed seven days, including arrival and departure during a time when Congress is in session. This program component should include sessions on U.S. domestic and foreign policy, the role of the media in a civil society (including media literacy), citizen empowerment, volunteerism and community activism, and federalism. The workshop may also provide opportunities to attend cultural events and visit museums and monuments. Your proposal should include a description of the ways in which all students will be encouraged to share what they have learned, both in their U.S. host communities and when they return to their home countries. You should plan to include the participation of several alumni to enhance the students' experience. Also, provide a mechanism for evaluation of the CEWs in terms of its impact on the students and in fulfilling objectives. The budget narrative should include a separate explanation of costs associated with this component.

19. End-of Year Combined Re-Entry Workshops

Develop and implement multiple-country re-entry workshops in the Washington D.C. area at the end of the exchange year for the inbound students. These may include meetings with U.S. Department of State and other government officials. Themes will include reverse culture shock, the U.S. Department of State's alumni programs and potential programs provided by U.S. Embassies, critical thinking, and skills and leadership development for becoming effective FLEX alumni. Dates must be coordinated with ECA's program office prior to reserving facilities or planning agendas to ensure coordination of official guests meeting with the students. Develop and implement re-entry workshops for the FLEX Abroad students covering similar themes prior to their return home to the United States.

20. Media Literacy and Critical Thinking Workshops

Develop and implement multiple online lessons and alumni workshops, both for current FLEX students and FLEX alumni. These activities may be done via social media platforms, for current students and alumni, or in-person workshops for alumni. Sessions for current students should be incorporated during civic education workshops and end-of-program workshops. These lessons and workshop activities should educate current students and alumni on analyzing media to identify misinformation and consider ways to address it effectively. This should include a range of media including television, radio, print, and digital media. Project development must be coordinated with ECA's program office prior to launching activities. The costs for these activities should be clearly identified in the budget.

21. Alumni

Regularly provide timely reports of significant alumni accomplishments throughout the exchange.

Alumni funding will support alumni activities to promote FLEX program goals and may support participation and travel of alumni to increase inclusiveness and outreach. The recipient must provide opportunities and training for alumni to reinforce skills learned on program and apply them at home; maintain a database to track alumni that must be compatible with ECA's database systems and must be shared with the State Alumni Office as well as the respective U.S. embassies; and collaborate with

organizations that may conduct other ECA-funded workshops or programs for FLEX students or alumni.

Students must be informed about and instructed on how to register on ECA's International Exchange Alumni website. Alumni must be encouraged to join alumni associations in each current partner country, or to establish a new FLEX alumni association where none exists. Reporting is required for existing networks of FLEX alumni associations' activities throughout participating countries (both past and present). In addition, you must provide a specific plan for using alumni in outreach efforts to rural areas.

Coordination of Additional Alumni Opportunities

Special activities in which FLEX alumni may choose to participate are an important way of keeping alumni involved in the program and sharing their American experience.

These activities may include:

- a. Designing and implementing a FLEX Alumni workshop(s) for competitively selected alumni, as well as webinars and other online training resources that can reach larger alumni audiences. Such workshops and online resources should be developed on themes relevant to program goals or U.S. Department of State foreign policy objectives such as alumni association development, leadership, media literacy and critical thinking, countering violent extremism, civic awareness, social media for social causes, support for people with disabilities, etc.
- b. An alumni small grants competition for which alumni may submit proposals for group and individual grants to execute a project in their home country. These and other alumni competitions should be publicized widely throughout all FLEX countries to reach as many alumni as possible.
- c. An alumni photo and video contest to build a multimedia reserve that can be used to publicize and market the FLEX program.
- d. Collaboration with U.S.-based organizations that conduct activities such as the *Global Village for Future Leaders of Business and Industry*. This is a professional development opportunity for FLEX alumni interested in entrepreneurship.

Other suggestions for creative and cost-effective alumni competitions are welcomed.

Alumni Resources Positions

Coordinate with overseas representatives and ECA to select successful alumni from any program year to participate in various events in the United States. Budget for travel to and within the United States and accommodations for select alumni to participate in events such as the Civic Education Workshop, broader State Alumni events, PO Coordinator trainings, national teacher and school administrator conferences, ECA FLEX program presentations, etc.

22. Information Management

The award recipient must maintain a student placement information database that is compatible with ECA's database for quick uploading of information and that tracks applicants through the stages of recruitment, their selection as finalists, their placement, and their transition to alumni status. The database should be regularly maintained and updated for accurate report generation. Data should be

available in a format that can be shared with ECA databases and should follow PII conventions.

23. Financial Management

The award recipient must manage fiscal data and accounting for award funding, as required by federal law, including cost-sharing and any funds provided to approved sub-recipients.

24. Sub-award Management

If sub-award recipients are involved, the primary award recipient will ensure that sub-award recipients have received a copy of the NOFO and POGI and are versed in all requirements, your organization's expectations, J-1 visa regulations, and OMB Guidance 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600. Under the cooperative agreement, the primary award recipient will be responsible for managing and providing oversight of sub-award recipients' performance to ensure that all program goals and objectives are being met.

25. Performance Reports

Semi-Annual Performance Reports: The award recipient is responsible for implementing mechanisms to monitor participants and the program's success and impact and report to ECA's program office and to the grants office on a semi-annual basis. The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Post Award Activity* under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement in the U.S. Department of State's [SAMS Domestic](#). The recipient must submit semi-annual performance reports that address, at a minimum, the following topics: past and planned program activities, financial expenditures and status (e.g., identify financial variations from original budgets), and the strengths and weaknesses of the organization's overall experience with the FLEX program as well as with individual participants. Such program descriptions should be supported by a qualitative narrative and quantitative data. Your organization should conduct an ongoing evaluation of program success in achieving stated objectives. Program and financial reports should include both quantitative and qualitative data.

The award recipient must submit an electronic copy of all performance reports to the program and grants offices no more than 30 days after the reporting period end dates.

Final Performance Report: Your organization must submit to the program office and ECA's grants division an electronic copy of a final performance report as a Post Award Activity under the corresponding record for this Cooperative Agreement in the U.S. Department of State's SAMS Domestic. This report must include a program and financial report and should include both qualitative and quantitative data to demonstrate impact, strengths, and weaknesses of the exchanges.

26. Evaluation

The award recipient must develop and implement a program evaluation plan to monitor and assess the success, effectiveness, and impact of the program. See the renewal solicitation for more information on developing an evaluation plan.

II.

PROGRAM SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

PROPOSAL CONTENTS

Applicants should submit a complete and thorough proposal describing the program in a convincing and comprehensive manner. Since there is no opportunity for applicants to meet with reviewing officials, the proposal should respond to the criteria set forth in the solicitation and other guidelines as clearly as possible.

Proposals should address succinctly, but completely, the elements described below and must follow all format requirements.

NOTE: Proposals submitted through Grants.gov may only be submitted in the following formats:

- Microsoft Word
- Microsoft Excel
- Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF)

Prior to submitting applications through Grants.gov, please ensure you meet all Grants.gov system and software requirements, including Adobe software compatibility. You can verify if your version of Adobe software is compatible with Grants.gov, by visiting <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>.

- ASCII Text
- Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG images)

Proposals should include the following items. All documents should be appropriately and clearly titled.

Online Forms

- SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance"
- SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs
- SF-424B, "Assurances – Non-Construction Programs," (only required for organizations if its representations and certifications have not been completed in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov). If an organization is exempt from registering in SAM.gov, then it would still need to provide the form as part of its application.)
- Include other attachments, if applicable, such as the Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), form 990 Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax, SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (only required for organizations that engage in lobbying activities), etc.

Program Narrative

Executive Summary (One page)

In one double-spaced page, provide the following information about the project:

1. Name of organization/participating institutions
2. Beginning and ending dates of the program
3. Proposed theme
4. Nature of activity

5. Funding level requested from the Bureau, total program cost, total cost-sharing from applicant and other sources
6. Scope and Goals
 - a. Number and description of both inbound and FLEX Abroad participants
 - b. Wider audience benefiting from program (overall impact)
 - c. Geographic diversity of program, both U.S. and overseas
 - d. Fields covered
 - e. Anticipated results (short and long-term)

Narrative

In 20 double-spaced, single-sided pages, provide a detailed description of the project addressing the areas listed below.

1. **Vision** (statement of need, objectives, goals, benefits)
2. **Participating Organizations**
 - Describe your organization's staffing to oversee the FLEX program.
 - Include subaward recipients, if applicable.
 - List individuals by name and position, and provide a brief description of each person's responsibilities.
3. **Program Activities**
 - Recruitment Process – Briefly describe the recruitment process, including your plan for advertising the competition and for scheduling the various stages of application and their locations. Explain your plan to begin recruitment in countries new to your organization. Explain your plan to design and implement a promotion and recruitment campaign for the FLEX Abroad pilot program. Describe any particular strategies for addressing situations where the political situation may affect the recruitment process. Explain how your application materials will ensure selection of the most qualified students and ensure the integrity of the merit-based process. Describe your plans for recruiting students with significant disabilities, including methods for increasing the applicant pool of qualified students with disabilities. Explain how you will amend recruitment materials to make them accessible to applicants with visual, auditory, or motor disabilities. A copy of the participant application should be included as an attachment. Provide your work plan/timeframe for recruitment/selection activities.
 - Selection Process – Briefly describe the selection process, including your plan for recruitment and training of application evaluators. Explain how you will ensure that finalists represent a diverse cross-section with regard to country of origin, gender, age, etc. In your work plan, include your arrangement (timeframe and method) for distributing finalist documentation to the POs.
 - Travel – Describe how your organization will efficiently and effectively arrange round-trip travel and ticketing of finalists from their home communities to their

hosting countries. Provide your plan for the participants' international and in-country domestic travel to their host community destinations and for their return home at the end of the program. Describe situations where unusual travel plans must be put into effect because of challenging political conditions. Explain how you will ensure thorough and appropriate communication with POs regarding travel, and how you will incorporate their input into the procedures for travel.

- Orientations – Describe your plan for participant orientations prior to both FLEX inbound and FLEX Abroad departure.
 - The Civic Education Workshop – Briefly describe the CEW format and provide a sample itinerary.
 - End of Year Combined Re-Entry Workshops – Briefly describe the format and provide a sample itinerary.
4. **Program Evaluation** – Describe the ways in which your organization will evaluate success in achieving its objectives and those of the program. Focus on methods that will be used to assess problem situations and develop plans to address these. Include specific materials that will be used for the purpose of assessment and evaluation.
 5. **Follow-on/Alumni** – Describe how your organization will maintain alumni programming and special events, including provisions for countries where circumstances may prevent you from conducting regular alumni activities. Include details on any special alumni projects that are planned. Emphasize the plan for using alumni to do outreach to remote regions both for increasing alumni participation and for attracting potential applicants from those regions. Indicate how your organization plans to make use of alumni in the selection process, orientation, and other program components. Describe the plan for conducting the alumni grants competition, the alumni photo contest, and any other alumni competitions you anticipate conducting. Explain how your organization will assist alumni who participated in special program components in the United States to implement what they learned after they return home. If using other alumni resources, such as an alumni newsletter, your proposal must include information on how and how often the newsletter will be used, advertised and distributed.
 6. **Program Management** – Describe how your organization will maintain communication between and among the OPA/PAS at the U.S. embassies, the natural families, POs, ECA, and other organizations administering components of the program, including any special provisions you will make in new countries or where challenging situations present obstacles to normal procedures.
 7. **Information Management** – Describe how you will maintain a database on applicants and their progression to either selection or rejection, participants on program, and alumni following their return home. Explain how you will update data on current participants in a timely fashion. Demonstrate that you have the ability to use the data to provide custom reports based on reporting requirements and ECA's needs. List the reports you will provide to ECA at the start of the academic year.
 8. **Work Plan/Time Frame**

Additional Information to be Submitted

Detailed budget

- a. Overseas infrastructure and administrative costs
- b. Program materials
- c. All international and domestic travel for participants and for staff and volunteers as needed to conduct and support program requirements. International travel for staff should be limited to what is essential for the success of the program, and detailed justification of such must be included in the Budget Narrative.
- d. Costs associated with monitoring students, troubleshooting, counseling, and resettling students, as necessary
- e. Program materials (an explanation of how materials are used must be included in the proposal)
- f. Administrative costs, including salaries, communications, and supplies
- g. Promotional material, including website development and maintenance
- h. Alumni activities

ECA funding may be requested for:

- i. Roundtrip transportation for inbound students from their homes to the United States embassy or consulate for visa interviews
 - j. Public relations efforts and other activities that promote the expansion of FLEX specific recruitment and hosting capacity
 - k. Consultants who support cross-cultural communication and understanding may provide training for your staff and volunteers and/or develop materials that support the unique cultural needs of FLEX students and provide additional student support
- Calendar of activities/itinerary
 - Letters of endorsement
 - Resumes and CVs (resumes of all new staff should be included in the submission; no resume should exceed two pages.)
 - First Time Applicant Attachments, if applicable.

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Calendar of Activities/Itinerary

The Calendar of Activities/Itinerary is a monthly plan of action or timetable that demonstrates the timing and organization of all responsibilities for the award. These should include, but not be limited to, monitoring local staff, students, and families; training events; submission of semi-annual reports; and dispersal of funds and information. This is not part of the 20 page limit on the program narrative. Please include a separate monthly timetable for the FLEX Abroad pilot program.

Budget Submission

Applicants must submit a Form SF-424A along with a comprehensive line item budget. The budget must include and distinguish between funds requested under the NOFO and funds applicants acquire through cost-sharing or from other sources. You must submit a Program Activity Cost Summary.

Include an explanatory budget narrative and submit per participant and total costs. Per participant costs are calculated as the total grant funds requested divided by the number of participants.

All budgets will be reviewed for cost-efficiency, including the percentage of the cooperative agreement that will be used for administrative expenses. Your organization will be responsible for managing fiscal data and accounting for funding, as required by federal law, including cost-sharing and funds provided to approved sub-recipient organization(s).

As noted above, please include a separate sub-budget not to exceed \$400,000 covering all elements of the FLEX Abroad pilot program, which is pending the availability of funds.

An accident and sickness health benefit plan or insurance for participants while they are in the United States will be provided by the POs under separate FY 2022 FLEX PO cooperative agreements.

Each budget must include the following costs:

- Overseas infrastructure costs
- Program materials
- Promotional materials, including social media and website development and maintenance (Proposals must offer examples and provide substantive justification for promotional requests and how the funds will advance marketing needs specific to the programs. General, ongoing promotion and marketing expenses of the organization may not be requested as a direct cost.)
- Overseas recruitment costs and U.S. recruitment costs for FLEX Abroad students
- International travel costs for students and for staff and volunteers as needed to conduct and support program requirements. International travel for staff should be limited to what is essential for the success of the program, and detailed justification of such must be included in the Budget Narrative.
- Selection costs
- Staff travel
- Costs associated with monitoring students, troubleshooting, counseling, and resettling students, as necessary
- Administrative costs, including salaries, communications, and supplies
- Civic Education Workshop costs for 200 inbound students during the 2022-23 academic year
- Alumni costs

Budgets also typically include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following items:

- Stipends and honoraria for non-salaried staff and volunteers
- Roundtrip transportation for students from their homes to the United States embassy or consulate for visa interviews
- Increasing the capacity of your organization's U.S. staff, or domestic and overseas partner organizations to manage FLEX program responsibilities
- Public relations efforts and other activities that promote the expansion of FLEX specific recruitment and hosting capacity

- Regional or national workshops for students/alumni that focus on FLEX program themes

Budget Narrative: A budget narrative must be included and provide detailed explanation for each budget line item where the activity purpose or means of calculation may not be clear or require further justification. It should include at minimum: (1) Formulae used to calculate right column totals for multiple or replicated costs, unless clearly noted in the columned budget (e.g., travel and per diem costs for multiple people; training materials and expenses based on participant number, etc.); (2) Supportive explanation and justification for activities and expenses determined essential, but that may not be understood from the narrative or may otherwise be unclear to reviewers (e.g. security expenses, unique training or support needs due to country conditions, etc.); and (3) Itemized breakdown of and strong justification for costs associated with relatively high amount line item requests that would reasonably be questionable by reviewers.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

The NOFO indicates the date the complete proposal is due and the manner in which proposals must be submitted. **There are NO EXCEPTIONS to this deadline.** For further information regarding this program or the competition, call Amy Schulz at (202) 632-6052, ECA/PE/C/PY; Fax: (202) 632-9355; email: SchulzAJ@state.gov.